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City of Charlestown.



ADDRESS OF THE MAYOR


AT THE

LAYING OF THE CORNER STONE

OF THE

HIGH SCHOOL BUILDING.

1847.



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CITY DOCUMENT—No. 5.

City of Charlestown.

ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY THE MAYOR,

OCTOBER 7, 1847,

AT THE

LAYING OF THE CORNER STONE

OF A

BUILDING FOR A HIGH SCHOOL

ON MONUMENT SQUARE.



CHARLESTOWN:

PRINTED AT THE FREEMAN OFFICE.

1847.

CITY OF CHARLESTOWN :

In Board of the Mayor and Aldermen,

OCTOBER 18, 1847.

Resolved, That, His Honor, the Mayor, be respectfully requested to furnish to this Board a copy of his appropriate address, delivered on the occasion of the laying of the corner stone of the new building designed for the High School, in order that the same may be published. Read, and adopted.

The Mayor then replied, that, in pursuance of the Resolve of the Board, he would furnish for its disposal a copy of the address.

Ordered, That the Committee on Printing on the part of this Board, be instructed to cause Two Thousand and Five Hundred copies of the address of His Honor, the Mayor, delivered at the laying of the corner stone of the edifice for the High School, to be printed in neat pamphlet form, for general distribution among the citizens. Read, and passed.

Attest, A. B. SHEDD, *City Clerk, pro tempore.*

ADDRESS.

GENTLEMEN OF THE CITY COUNCIL, AND

FELLOW CITIZENS :

WE are assembled this morning to lay, with appropriate ceremony, the corner stone of an edifice, designed for a public High School. The City Government has fully admitted the obligation imposed upon it by law, and by the dictates of a wise policy, to provide liberal means for the education of the young. Having decided to make new arrangements for the better accommodation of the present schools, by the erection of two new Grammar School Houses with the conveniences adapted to the increased numbers, it has also resolved to wipe out the stain which has hitherto rested upon Charlestown in her neglect to establish a High School for furnishing to the advanced scholars the means of a finished and complete education.

Hitherto it has been considered by us sufficient to provide instruction for children in reading, penmanship and the bare rudiments of practical knowledge. We have only Primary and Grammar Schools. The first are for children from four to eight years of age, who

are there taught the Alphabet, a few tabular forms, and reading and spelling. On leaving the Primary, the children are sent to the Grammar Schools, there to remain until they are sixteen years of age—if they can stay there so long to any advantage—and are further instructed in reading and spelling, and also in penmanship, arithmetic, grammar, geography, and a few other branches of English study.

For eight years—more than one tenth part of the ordinary standard of the longest lives, and these years the most valuable and the most precarious of all—the children are made to spend their days in the same school-house, and to go through a constant routine of exercises and lessons, which in a very short time become familiar. This long continued familiarity—this monotony of scene must have the effect to repress the ardor and enthusiasm of youth, to stifle that curious spirit of inquiry, that thirst after knowledge, which nature has implanted within them for the development of their intellectual powers, and to induce a spirit of dulness and apathy calculated to encourage the formation of indolent and vicious habits.

Four years constitute a term long enough for one class of schools. It is the term generally allotted to primary instruction; it is also the full term of a collegiate course. The important intervening period of eight years—from the age of eight to sixteen—ought to be divided into the Grammar and the Academic or High School.

The human faculties require constant exercise and renewed motives for action. Unless they are in early life suitably tasked, they lose their vigor. If they are not made to advance, they will of themselves recede.

If they do not gain strength from being constantly nerved to vigorous exercise, they will lapse into deterioration and decay. Discipline and severe tasks are as necessary to the vigor of mind, as exercise and labor are to bodily health and strength. For a complete and thorough education there should be planned a regular series of appropriate studies, properly classified and various, each in turn being more difficult than the preceding, and all of them interesting and useful. The Languages, ancient and modern, the Sciences, History, Philosophy and Rhetoric, the means for thorough instruction in all these should be furnished in the High School. Whatever is inculcated, should be earnestly and clearly presented to the youthful mind with all the attractions that naturally belong to the subject, and with the apt and copious illustrations of skilful and devoted teachers. The mind thus addressed will seize hold of, and thoroughly master the subject. As in erecting an imposing edifice—like the one now in contemplation—the foundation must first be carefully prepared, and each course of masonry must be laid in a workmanlike manner, the beams and frame-work securely placed, and the ornament and finish well adjusted ;—so in the rearing of the mind, each successive course of study must be appropriate to the understanding, a substantial foundation must be laid with the solid rudiments, and by the training of one faculty after another, a superstructure must be formed in which the useful, the practical and the ornamental are gracefully blended, until at last an intellectual character is built up which will exhibit the mental powers developed in full strength and beautiful proportion.

In our Commonwealth the public has taken upon itself the whole charge of the education of the young, and has designated for this purpose a period of twelve years. Our State laws have so devolved upon the public this educational care of the young, not by any means that it should do less than parental affection would dictate, but that in the forming of a comprehensive system of public instruction, and by embracing all the children of the Commonwealth within its range, the great work of preparation for life might be done better than it could be accomplished by individual effort. Recognizing the doctrine of American Independence, that "all are born free and equal," the laws of our Commonwealth intend that all her children shall receive the same facilities of public instruction, so that in the mind and character, which are the essential elements of the true dignity of life, they may all have, in proportion as they improve the advantages offered, a fair opportunity to live equal. This is the theory of our laws upon the support of public schools. True indeed it is, that the principle has never been carried out into perfect operation. Here, as everywhere else, a vast amount of natural talent has remained dormant. Minds of strong natural capacity there have been in every age, which from neglect and from the want of proper culture in youth have failed of accomplishing the beneficial results, which they might and ought to have done. The talents and native energies of thousands have been wasted or misguided; and their mental force and moral power, which should have been developed for the benefit of the race, have been unfortunately lost to the world.

The momentous importance of this consideration cannot be fully appreciated by the public. There is but one youth to a life. If in a single instance that season is neglected, then is one human life crippled of its proper means of usefulness and enjoyment. But if a whole community is at fault, if in the seed-time, it hesitates and delays to perform its duty, if it deals out the seeds of knowledge in a partial, parsimonious or unskilful manner, then in the next generation will the harvest be blighted, and a desolating famine will fall upon the land.

It has been said to be too much the characteristic of our people to look backward into the history of their past. We are prone to glorify ourselves for the deeds of our fathers; we love to extol the heroes of the revolution; we praise their deeds, and by our unstinted praise would adopt them as our own. This retrospect is indeed pleasant, but as we frequently indulge ourselves in taking it, we should at the same time contrast the plans and labors which we are extending for the benefit of those who are to come after us with the toils and hardships which our fathers endured for us. We should turn our eyes forward and look to the prospect of coming years. We should provide for the future destinies of our country. As the most effectual means to this end we should devote our time and treasures to the improvement and support of a sufficient number of public schools, of the various grades, with the same spirit of duty and patriotism with which our fathers pledged "their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor" for the sake of gaining liberty for them and for us. Thankful ought we to be, that it is our duty only to preserve and secure what our fathers struggled with

countless sacrifices to obtain. The City Council has adopted for the motto of our new city, "Liberty—a trust to be transmitted to posterity," and in no more certain way can this trust be transmitted than by devising and maintaining a complete system of public education. The liberal expenditures which we are this year incurring for the erection of this and other school houses will be repaid to our City an hundred fold in the improved intellectual condition of her children. Although the outlay in the first instance is necessarily large, still, by laying aside a moderate sum each successive year, the burden of which no one will feel, a fund will in a short time be accumulated sufficient to pay the whole cost; and while we are every day reaping the reward, we shall also be able to present to the next generation as an unincumbered legacy these bulwarks and defences which we have set up in our City coeval with her establishment to preserve inviolate this sacred trust.

The High School to be established on this spot is designed for Girls as well as for Boys. It is a republican and a Christian doctrine, that although in some slight respects different branches of study may properly be pursued by the two sexes as adapted to their respective spheres, equal advantages of public instruction ought to be afforded to both. Relying upon intelligence and virtue as the foundation of our free institutions, our whole social and political fabric depends much for its stability and order upon the cultivated talent and moral excellence of woman. The sister and the mother have an immeasurable influence upon the conduct of the boy and the man. Discipline and strengthen the mind, cultivate and direct the moral and intellectual faculties of the female sex, and you elevate

the whole race. In our land of liberty this principle should be distinctly recognized. By the decree of Providence woman is to be the companion of man through the journey of life. In the hour of sickness she is to solace him, in the time of perplexity and temptation to counsel and sustain him, and amid all the toils and cares, the joys and sorrows of every day life to assist and relieve, to rejoice and sympathize with him. How strongly is man bound by every obligation of duty and by every consideration of interest to place the standard of female education on the highest ground, and to determine that, so far as the means are furnished at the public charge, the daughters of our free Commonwealth shall be as well qualified for their duties as the sons shall be for theirs !

A prejudice has heretofore existed in some minds against a public High School from the vague and unfounded suggestion that none but the children of wealthy parents can readily avail themselves of its advantages. Nothing can be more at variance from the truth than this idea. By our State law the public schools are open to all without distinction. There is not the least danger that any favoritism will be exhibited by any persons having authority over the different schools, either in the mode of applying the general rules of admission, or in the mode of governing the different pupils. That strong respect for personal right, that vigilant jealousy with which it is guarded in all places, and especially in the latitude of Bunker Hill, would put down such a disposition whenever and by whomsoever manifested.

Nor is it true that parents who are not wealthy, are regardless of the importance of having their chil-

dren attend the public schools of the first grade, to receive the benefit of all the instruction that may be afforded. Go into any of the High Schools in the neighboring cities, and in the first rank you will find some of the most promising pupils to be those whose only capital or dowry which they will have to start with in life, will be a good education and a good character. Many of the most eminent men and women of our State were children of poor parents, and they owe their present favorable position to the free schools. In them they learned the history of our country and were taught to compare it with the history of the republics of ancient days, and with that of other nations of the present time. In them they first imbibed a reverence for our republican institutions, and acquired the requisite qualifications by which they are now able to sustain and perfect what in youth they were taught to admire.

Raze from the land our free school system, or what is about as disastrous, neglect to provide the means of sustaining the schools in an adequate manner, but keep them at so low a level, that every parent who can possibly afford it, will take his child away from them, and you strike at the foundation of a free government. It is quite unnecessary to enforce this sentiment here where its justice is so generally acknowledged. The lightning in some furious storm may shiver that shaft into the separate masses of which it is constructed, the earth in some violent convulsion of nature may shake it from its solid foundation; but it cannot be, that the men who shall dwell beneath its lofty summit will ever prove recreant to the principles which it proclaims, will ever, by slighting the demands of popular education, show

themselves unworthy of their inheritance and reckless of the real welfare of their children.

It has been wisely determined to erect on this site a building of a permanent character, which will be adapted to the wants of a flourishing and intelligent community, a building tastefully designed according to the rules of a classic architecture, one which will stamp an impression of dignity upon our City, which will be appropriate to its object and to the consecrated ground on which it is to stand. Such an edifice will inspire the minds of the pupils who from time to time shall be assembled within its walls with ideas of taste and beauty, with a salutary feeling of just pride that they belong to such a school, and with a corresponding spirit of emulation to strive to become worthy members of it.

The character of the man is moulded by the early and impressive influences and associations of his youth. Whatever is then presented to him that is seemly, agreeable and consonant with correct taste will always have a purifying influence upon his mind and heart. The more such influences can be made to operate upon the young, the more likely are they to grow up intelligent and virtuous. This consideration ought never to be disregarded in the construction and arrangement of school houses. If the school room be confined and ill-ventilated, the seats uncomfortable and crowded close together, the form or bench unsuited to the youthful frame, if the building itself be awkward, disfigured and scarcely kept in decent repair, if the grounds around be neglected and resemble the frightful neighborhood of a pest house, then will the school and its legitimate pursuits be repulsive, and while the children are detained there, they will think of little else on each day than of

the hour when they shall be dismissed to breathe pure air and to unfetter their limbs in open space. Surely the place, where in every age, the rising generation are to be qualified for the serious duties and responsibilities of life, ought of all others to be rendered attractive.

It is one of the great means of success in the business of instruction, it is indeed the very first step to be taken, to make the children feel desirous of learning, to convince them that it is a high privilege which they have, to be allowed to attend the public schools. Let the teacher instil such a feeling in the minds of the young, and above all, let the people by their constituted agents make the outward and internal arrangements of all the schools so fitting and appropriate that the discerning youths will see that we are in earnest when we talk of the importance of education, and they will greedily take hold of the instruction offered; they will grow up with a profound respect for parental and civil authority and for that system of government which is every day developing their capacities of pure enjoyment.

Fellow Citizens, not one of us can truly estimate the beneficial consequences that are likely to flow from this important undertaking. Its immediate effects will be visible in the improvement of our grammar schools. The pupils who attend these will have presented before them a more powerful inducement to apply themselves assiduously to the preparatory studies and exercises in order to be seasonably qualified for admission to the High School. The Teachers of the Grammar Schools will naturally feel a stronger incentive to exertion, as another public test will obviously offer itself for comparing their different merits. So by the united efforts

of teachers and pupils an enthusiastic spirit of study, a love of correct knowledge will be cultivated, which will wake up the minds of our youth and give them a new start. I believe that the High School will also have the effect to induce among the young a more correct and orderly deportment; for in every place, as you elevate the standard of education you also will elevate the standard of character.

May the Gentlemen of the School Committee, whose honored province it is to control and govern all our schools, be fortunate from the first in the introduction and proper arrangement of the various branches of learning that ought to be pursued in this High School, in the framing of judicious regulations for its internal government, and in the selection of competent and devoted instructors. And, fellow citizens, when all of us shall have passed away from the stage of life, when there shall not be one of the present generation living to inform the men of the twentieth century of the doings of these times, may the Institution this day planted yield its own good fruit and be ever fondly cherished by the people. May there annually proceed from it the young of both sexes, who, having been well disciplined and thoroughly instructed, will by the aid here received sustain the reputation of this memorable place. And as from year to year, by the discovery of new truths and principles in science and of improved methods of illustrating and enforcing them, additional knowledge shall be imparted, may the attachment of its pupils grow stronger and stronger to our country and all her free institutions, to this City which will have so nobly performed her duty to the young, and to the faithful teachers who shall have labored for their

advancement. When under the benign influences of this most improved form of municipal government, the population of Charlestown shall be multiplied, her prosperity increased, and her good name still more exalted, it will not be forgotten, that during the first year of a City Organization, this corner stone was laid and a permanent foundation secured for the more liberal and improved education of the young. As long as this Monument shall commemorate the successful contests of our fathers for National Independence, may the High School, standing up proudly by its side, serve, by its generous and ennobling influences, to perpetuate and guaranty the blessings of that Independence to our children's children unto the remotest generation.

INSCRIPTION UPON THE PLATE DEPOSITED UNDER THE CORNER STONE.

CHARLESTOWN HIGH SCHOOL FOR BOYS AND GIRLS.

This Corner Stone laid October 7, A. D. MDCCCXLVII.

Joint Committee of the City Council on Public Instruction.—G. Washington Warren, Mayor; Paul Willard, Alderman; and C. W. Moore, President, H. A. Pierce and I. Lindsey, Members of the Common Council.

School Committee.—H. K. Frothingham, President; Geo. Farrar, Secretary; Joseph F. Tufts, Treasurer; James Adams, J. W. Bemis, N. Y. Culbertson, James Miskelly, George A. Parker, John Sanborn, Edward Thorndike and Seth J. Thomas.

Architect.—Ammi B. Young.

Builders.—James Tuttle and A. S. Tuttle, Masons.

John B. Wilson and Charles Wilson, Carpenters.

☞ There were also deposited in a leaden box with the plate, the documents printed by the City Government, including the City Register, several Documents printed lately by the Town, including the last two annual reports of the School Committee, and the Report of the Committee of the Town upon obtaining a City Charter, &c. Also, a copy of the Bunker Hill Aurora, and of the Middlesex Freeman, and a few coins.

